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SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 21 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: SINO-JAPAN
RELATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE OLYMPICS, THAI COUP, IRAN,
UNIFIL, LATIN AMERICA AND AID TO AFRICA

¶1. Key points made at the September 21 MFA press briefing were:

- China hopes new LDP leader Shinzo Abe will make concrete efforts to improve Sino-Japanese relations.
- China and Japan will hold the Sixth Round of their strategic dialogue in Tokyo from September 23 to 24.
- Japan's proper handling of historical issues is key to the development of bilateral relations.
- China claims Amnesty International's Human Rights Report on China and the Olympics is biased, politically motivated, and factually incorrect.
- China has issued a travel warning and set up a 24-hour hotline for Chinese citizens affected by the coup in Thailand.
- China believes EU talks with Iran have been productive and hope this momentum will continue towards a peaceful resolution.
- China is still consulting with the UN on specific arrangements for the arrival of troops China recently committed to UNIFIL.
- Chinese leaders recently met with leaders of Costa Rica, Peru and Argentina.
- China is committed to helping African nations and their people through the China-Africa Cooperation Forum.

Sino-Japanese Relations

¶2. China hopes that Shinzo Abe, the newly-elected President of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will make concrete efforts to improve Sino-Japanese relations, MFA Spokesperson Qin Gang said on September 21. The bilateral relationship is based on the three Sino-Japanese Joint Communiques and China hopes Japan will honor its commitments. Dai Bingguo will meet with Japanese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Yachi Shotaro at the sixth round of their Strategic Dialogue to be held September 23-24 in Tokyo. Qin has no information on a possible meeting between Dai Bingguo and Shinzo Abe.

¶3. In response to repeated questions for further information on possible obstacles to Sino-Japanese relations, Qin added that Sino-Japanese relations are based on the "proper handling of historical issues, including the Taiwan issue." Japan has undermined the relationship's two foundations:

using "history as a mirror for the future" and the three political documents between Japan and China. Japan must return to these fundamentals and take concrete actions to improve relations.

¶4. "Koizumi has been Prime Minister for five years, and the change in Sino-Japanese relations can be seen by all," Qin said in response to AFP's request for an assessment of Koizumi. As to whether China was optimistic or pessimistic, he said it would "have to watch what Abe says and does." In response to a question by Tokyo News, Qin declined to comment on whether or not a Sino-Japanese Summit would be possible if Abe refuses to commit to not visiting Yasakuni Shrine. He stressed that Beijing's policy has not changed and encourages reporters to look at previous statements. Qin refused to answer a question on whether Communist Party International Department Director (CCID) Wang Jiarui would travel to Japan.

Human Rights and the Olympics

¶5. Amnesty International's (AI) September 14 Human Rights Report on China is biased, groundless and motivated by political purposes, Qin said in response to an AP reporter's request for comment on AI's statement that China was failing to meet promises to improve human rights it had made during its bid for the 2008 Olympic Games. Qin said it was too narrow to say China was only making an effort to improve human rights in order to win the Olympic Games, noting that respect for human rights was enshrined in China's constitution. Preparation for the 2008 Games is proceeding in an orderly fashion and China is fulfilling its commitment and showing it has the capacity to hold a successful Olympic Games.

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Military Coup in Thailand

¶6. Political changes in Thailand are internal affairs and China remains committed to a policy of non-interference, Qin said. As a friendly neighbor, China hopes Thailand will experience harmony, prosperity and peace. China has set up a 24-hour hotline for Chinese citizens and issued a travel alert on its website advising visitors to Thailand to reschedule travel. The Chinese Embassy in Thailand will remain vigilant and provide all necessary assistance to Chinese citizens, including Hong Kong residents.

New Iran Deadline?

¶7. Qin responded to an AFP reporter's statement that China and other interested countries had set a new deadline for Iran by stating that he had not heard of any such news. Qin said China's position on the Iran nuclear issue, specifically that diplomatic consultations and negotiations would resolve the issue, remained unchanged. He noted that European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana's recent talks with Iran had been productive and that he hoped would maintain the momentum towards a peaceful resolution. He hoped all parties would express restraint and flexibility in the meantime.

UNIFIL

¶8. China is still consulting with the UN on specific arrangements for the arrival of the troops China recently committed to the Lebanon reconstruction effort, Qin told the AFP reporter asking for an update on the issue.

Latin America

¶9. Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing met Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez at the UNGA to discuss the two countries work towards establishing and developing &normal state-to-state relations,8 Qin said. He added that on Vice Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi,s recent visit to Peru and Argentina, Yang exchanged views on bilateral relations and cooperation between China and their respective foreign ministries.

Development Assistance to Africa

¶10. China is committed to helping African nations and their people through the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, Qin read from a prepared statement. China has already written off the debts of 31 heavily indebted nations and President Hu has promised to grant low-interest loans to 39 such nations. China actively supports poverty alleviation programs and encourages other nations to do so as well. Loans should be efficient and conducive to long-term development goals, helping recipients to develop their own capacity. China is committed to technical cooperation programs and to increasing imports from Africa to support sustainable long-term development.

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